

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH COLONEL SHELIA BRYANT-TUCKER, INSPECTOR GENERAL, MULTI NATIONAL SECURITY TRANSITION COMMAND-IRAQ VIA TELECONFERENCE FROM IRAQ) SUBJECT: DEVELOPING THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGY MODERATOR: CHARLES "JACK" HOLT, CHIEF, NEW MEDIA OPERATIONS, OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS) TIME: 10:59 A.M. EDT DATE: THURSDAY, APRIL 17, 2008

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COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: (In progress) -- here and the part that we play here at the IG section of MNSTC-I. Anticorruption in Iraq is three-prongs -- the IG, the commission on integrity and the board or supreme audit.

The State Department has a mandate for mentoring all of these entities in the government of Iraq except for those within the Iraqi security forces, which is the MOD -- Ministry of Defense, rather -- and Ministry of Interior. The effort for the State Department is headed by Ambassador Larry Benedict from the Anticorruption Office and he's established a working group that encompasses representatives from various entities, USAID, U.N., other coalition members and MNFI, Multinational Forces-Iraq. And he's -- we've been charged -- and MNSTC-I is also a member -- we've been charged with building a strategy that can address anticorruption from a consolidated front within the government of Iraq.

My primary purpose -- hold on just a second.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

Q Hey Jack?

MR. HOLT: Yea?

Q Bruce McQuain, I just joined you online.

MR. HOLT: Okay, Bruce. Thanks. Anybody else join us while we're here?

Q Greg Grant here.

MR. HOLT: Okay, Greg.

Q Jack Berkman (sp) here at Navy Research -- (inaudible).

MR. HOLT: Okay.

STAFF: Jack, if you could just hold off here for a second we'll be right back.

MR. HOLT: All right.

STAFF: Just hold it one minute.

MR. HOLT: Okay, we'll be standing by.

And I'd just like to remind you we're talking with Colonel Sheila Bryant-Tucker with the MNSTC-I IG's office. She's the IG advisor and she will be back with us here in just a few minutes.

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: Okay. I'm sorry. We just had an alarm go off here, so -- at any rate, my primary purpose here is to assist the Iraqi government within the Iraqi security forces with developing and implementing an IG system that is robust and that incorporates inspections, audits and investigations. Our goal is to eliminate or decrease the instances of corruption, fraud, abuse of power, and to implement the rule of law.

How are we doing that? Well, the IG system was brought into existence in its current form by Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 57 -- that's CPA Order 57 which was signed by Paul Brimmer (sp) in 2004. It's flourished somewhat in the ISF largely because of the readily available mentors in MOI and MOD. The 31 other ministries within the government of Iraq haven't enjoyed that luxury and have not had direct support like the MOD and MOI have had, and they have basically shared a single advisor. And so there hasn't been a whole lot of progress in those areas. But within the MOD and MOI there is -- there are inspections, audits and investigations departments as well as human rights.

Within MOD, there's the military inspectors which is very akin to what we use as our model in the U.S. where the inspectors are the eyes, ears and conscience of the commander. Their goal is to help increase readiness, ensure that life support systems are functional and that people are getting paid; supply systems are adequate to supply beans; bullets and band aids -- those normal functions that the military addresses; and that allegations of human rights abuses are reported and investigated.

There's also a civilian. IG portion of that which would be interested in investigating allegations of public fraud, misuse of government funds -- that part is still in development, but we're using some of the standards from international code of ethics. The government of Iraq has a financial disclosure law, and at some point, hopefully, we'll implement the convention on corruption. But right now, the government of Iraq is a signatory, but it has not yet been ratified.

Within MOI, of course this covers the police forces within Iraq. That's the national police, the Iraqi police and the special police that cover guarding buildings et cetera. And the goal there is basically the same but just within a police structure rather than the military; there are a lot of similarities. Within the Ministry of Interior there's also an entity known as internal affairs, and that's a very stringent department that -- whose job it is to weed out corrupt and militia membership within the police forces, and they've been pretty successful in doing that.

We've got a lot of training that goes on. There's an abundance of training within both ministries. The MOD is the training development center in that it has a specific IG curriculum and teaches basic IG courses, human rights, women's rights, investigations and inspections courses. The military inspectors

have courses specifically designed for the Iraqi military inspectors, and their inspectors are assigned to each of their divisions. So there would be military inspectors -- inspector to be the eyes and ears of each of the commanders of the military division in the Iraqi army. This course was structured again from the Army courses taught at Fort Belvoir, but it's modified specifically for Iraq. And they've also developed standards to specialize the military inspectors and to provide a baseline for which to measure effectiveness and readiness. More than 80 have completed the course and there's one actually going on today. It's going on over Saturday, and it's taught by the Iraqi instructors. In 2007, the MOI trained over 140 IGs through five training sessions and currently they have a course for 250 police recruits who will first learn to be police and then they're going to be further trained as IGs, hopefully to make them more productive and to let them go out and work in the provinces in Iraq.

We have also got training from diverse sources such as UNAMI -- the United Nations rather -- USAID, the FBI and internally. And they've taught courses like interviewing, investigation techniques, again, human rights, combating public corruption and basic auditing courses. But progress has been uneven and it's been slow, and that's primarily because this is a new concept and it requires a complete paradigm shift for the government of Iraq to really embrace it and to feel it and make it part of the culture. But some of the signs that that is happening is that the government of Iraq has held an anticorruption convention itself earlier this year, and from that they derived a set of milestone that they would like to accomplish this year.

Some of those milestones include building a civil service kind of structure, achieving transparency, so that includes the financial disclosure law, ratifying the U.N. Convention against corruption, training in public administration and encouraging public participation, and letting the public know that they have the right and the duty and the obligation to report corruption. Those are some of the things that the Iraqi government has said that they want to accomplish.

And so the State Department's anticorruption strategy will be focuses largely to help them accomplish those goals.

The U.N. also sponsored several conferences this year and have suggested some steps that should be taken because, here, from the Iraqi perspective, political corruption is really one of the paramount issues. The specific area that derive from the U.N. conference on good governance and anticorruption were areas that the legislation needs to really focus on is protection of witnesses, the criminalization of corruption and media access and a media campaign. And this was endorsed by the Deputy Prime Minister, Barham Salih, who opened the conference and focused on the government of Iraq should take.

What are some of the obstacles that we have right now? Well, first and paramount is security. Several internal affairs personnel and IGs have either been killed or wounded while doing their jobs just coming to work and in the course of doing investigations. It makes it very difficult to go out and do those kinds of things when your life is threatened just because you are there. Oftentimes, individuals are placed in positions for which they're not qualified. There should be a stronger emphasis from the government on anticorruption measures and enforcement. Enforcement of the rule of law has got to be a priority with the government. And, of course, security and -- security for the judges, security for the judicial process itself has to be in place for

enforcement to work, but that's a weakness that's been identified over and over again.

And another problem is that success in this endeavor is personality based. There are a couple of bright stars like General Ahmed Taha (sp) with the MOI internal affairs and General Anwar who's the military IG. They're courageous and they're brave and they go out and they make things happen, but they are -- it's based on their personality. No matter what the process and procedures that are in place, if you don't have the person in place to do the job, then it's very personality-driven. It's difficult.

But ultimately, the Iraqi people, the ones who I've spoken to, the ones who come to work every day and risk their lives just to get here, they want peace and they want stability and they want a place where they can raise their kids. And corruption is tantamount to terrorism, and it's a symbiotic kind of relationship. The corruption, the ill-gotten gains fuels and feeds the insurgency, and so, you know, our job is to help to weed it out and to strike out the elements of corruption that are so pervasive in this society.

Do you have questions?

MR. HOLT: Okay. I'm sure we do. And like we did before, like we always do, when I call your name please state your full name and your publication. So Andrew, why don't you get us started.

Q Colonel, good afternoon. Andrew Lubin from Military Observer. Thanks for taking the time to speak with us today.

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: You're quite welcome.

Q Colonel, I spent a fair amount of time in the Middle East doing business and also in Iraq back in the late 70s. Are we trying to put a system on them that genetically they almost don't want to get involved in? I mean, they have an anti -- your anticorruption symposium that you mentioned, that's great, but their anticorruption minister not only quit, but he fled the country and wasn't replaced. How are you going to break that in the 1,000 years of meetings? They don't seem to want to break the system.

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: Your reference to the corruption minister, are you referring to Judge Radhi?

Q No, this is the anticorruption minister who fled the country about six months ago because his life was threatened.

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: That would be Judge Radhi, yes.

Q Okay.

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: He has been replaced, in fact, by a new judge Rahim -- I believe his name is -- and that's the commission on integrity. And it is in existence still and they are -- you know, that was my concern when initially took this job -- isn't it just contrary to, you know, the process of this country and the feeling. As I said, it's a paradigm shift, yes. But, ultimately, I think that the people want it and embrace it. In fact, within the Parliament there is an anticorruption representative. One of the -- what was his name? -- his name is Sheik Sabah Al-Sayidi (sp). He's the president of the integrity committee of the Iraqi parliament. And so, you might think you can't

change what's happened in the past, but difficult times call for, you know, stronger measures and I think that there is hope. I think they've embraced the idea.

Q They've been taking money for thousands of years. I was paying them when I worked for an -- (inaudible) -- company back in the 70s. That's kind of the way they do business in the Middle East. I mean you're asking an entire region to change the way that they've been -- you know, something that goes back 1,000 years. COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: That's possible but, you know, some of the things that we've tried to do here is to incorporate the normal processes that the Iraqis use in building the anticorruption effort; in other words, not just take something off the shelf and translate it into Arabic bit to get the involvement of the Iraqi employees who are actually working in anticorruption.

How do you conduct an investigation? How do you do it now? What is the process that makes you feel comfortable so that it'll stick once we're gone without, you know, our input? What is it that works? And for instance, whenever there is an allegation of any kind of wrongdoing, what they do, in fact, is build a committee to go and investigate it. And you might think that that doesn't occur but it -- you know, even before we established this version of the IG, they had a similar kind of thing which was called the general inspector, and they actually did conduct inspections but it was more like punitive.

What our job is now is to try and identify it and identify corruption or abuse of power and either help somebody correct their behavior or to enforce the law by turning it over to an investigative agency which is the investigative judge. That's how the system works here. But, you know, I thought, like you do, that there wasn't that kind of check and balance in place but it did exist at some point and there are some mechanisms -- there are laws -- it's just a matter of enforcing them. So, yeah, there's the possibility that it's going to work. I'm hopeful. I've dedicated a year of my life to help make it work.

MR. HOLT: Alright. And Jarred.

Q Yes ma'am thank you for your time. You mentioned some of the generalities. Could you talk a little bit to the specifics of what you see in the last few months regarding the progress actually on the ground dealing with -- especially particularly maybe if you want to mention about Basra trying to get the corruption that's going on down there knocked out. Give us some real world specifics that we could discuss.

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: Well, you know, I'm not at liberty to talk about the specific military objectives of what happened in Basra. But the IG for the joint headquarters group did write an after action report that he delivered to the commanders to give them advice on how they can improve, how they can make things better. That was the one aspect of what -- of the IG influencing the process. And also the Minister of Interior mandated that the IGs go out to all the provinces and to the divisions and find out what kind of things went wrong. So they're taking a very aggressive effort -- making a very aggressive effort to go -- on their own -- to find out what would make things improve.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: I can't give you specifics as to what the results are. They're still out doing their investigations. Q Well, I'm not really talking about military objectives. I'm talking about the fact about specifics as far as rooting out corruption within the Iraqi government and the different

programs that you were talking about. Is there not one specific example you could give us as far as numbers of cases brought, prosecutions, that kind of thing that's happened in the last few weeks?

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: In the last few week I can't because those numbers haven't been released to us yet. But -- let's see, for instance, within the MOI, there were -- hold on a second let me get those numbers. Within the MOI, the internal affairs is primarily the agency that does those kinds of investigations and not the IG because of its structure. Again, like a police department works, the internal affairs is the one that roots out the corrupt individuals. And they've investigated over, I think, 1,600 cases and resulted in several hundred people being fired, and -- including 200 general officers. So, within the MOI -- I'm sorry, within the MOD, there were in 2006 132 anti-corruption cases investigated, and 89 were completed. These are old numbers, but the statistics come out at the end of the year. There's not been a whole lot of progress in terms of what gets prosecuted, so I can't really tell you that. But within MOI, for instance, there have been a number of division commanders or general officers who've been relieved for their affiliations with JAM or for being corrupt.

MR. HOLT: Okay. And Bryant.

Q Hi. Bryant Jordan, Military.com.

Thank you very much.

You mentioned fired. And I know that frequently an officer's fired because of not going to engage the enemy in Basra. Does anybody ever go to jail for corruption or do they get fired?

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: That's a good question. Again, that's one of our challenges is is the enforcement part of it. And it's really going to take. It's going to take the will of the prime minister. There is an executive order that exists, 136B, that allows him to decide who gets prosecuted, who get prosecuted for whatever crime within -- with any minister or senior level officer. It has to be approved by him before they can be prosecuted. So, yeah, that difficult. It's -- I cannot specifically tell you that there's been somebody who's gone to jail for their behavior. It's a matter of the -- investigative judges have the responsibility of -- it's sort of like a blend between the district attorney and the grand jury. They decide what charges will be brought against a person, which charges are likely to stand up. And again, it's based on confession -- the judicial system here is based on confession. So, if the person doesn't confess or if there aren't two or three adult witnesses who actually saw the behavior, then it's very difficult to convict someone in this particular -- at this time in the judicial history of Iraq, it's very difficult.

Q So a paper trail won't work if there's -- say, if an audit comes up with saying, this guy stole, you know, 40 pounds of gold or whatever. It doesn't matter because, no, it's not me, it wasn't me. That ends it?

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: The board of supreme audit is primarily responsible for, you know, investigating that kind of corruption. Now that -- the board or supreme audit is one of the oldest entities in Iraq. It's been around even during Saddam's time and long before that. And their job is to investigate that kind of corruption and theft within the government. Now, is a paper trail viable evidence? I would say that it is. Yes. I cannot -- I still

cannot tell you that I have -- that I personally have knowledge of someone going to jail for corruption.

MR. HOLT: Okay. And Bruce.

Q Thank you. Q Hi Colonel. Bruce McQuain with qando. You mentioned earlier -- or at the beginning of your statement that the State Department has a mandate for mentoring in this area -- corruption. And that -- I believe you said that MOD and MOI each have a mentor. Is that correct?

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: Yes.

Q But you said that 31 other ministries only have one?

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: Unfortunately that's the case. Yes.

Q Now is that a function of just not staffing slots by the State Department or is that the plan?

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: You know, I really can't address what their, you know, motivation is. There've been reports from the special investigator for Iraqi construction, SIGIR, that have suggested that 00 that a lot more is needed. And so as a result of that, we have Ambassador Benedict now who's been here a couple of weeks. And I'm not sure -- you know he's just getting here and he may have a different strategy for addressing that but I would say absolutely it's necessary, that they do need more than just one single person to mentor these other 31 ministries.

As you may have heard, the Ministry of Oil, the Ministry of Health, all of those entities have pervasive corruption within them. And I think that an IG mentor would help tremendously.

Q Okay. Thank you.

MR. HOLT: Okay. And Greg.

Q Yes, Colonel. I'm interested to know -- the tribal networks that exist in Iraq have relied so long on kind of the patronage system where they dole out favors, money and other goodies to their tribal members. Are you working at that level at all? Are you engaged at that level? And how are you working with the tribal communities, if so?

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: No, we don't. What we're teaching and mentoring is strictly government -- within the area of government corruption. And what's been most successful has been the military inspectors.

Q Okay. Thank you.

MR. HOLT: Alright. Okay. Bart, any -- are you with us?

Okay. Any other follow up questions?

Q Yes. I do, if we have time. MR. HOLT: Okay.

Q Colonel, Andrew Lubin again, following up on the last question. If you're not going to address the Sunni tribes and the tribal system of patronage and bits and pieces stuff or the contractor's taking 5 (percent) or 10

percent. And if you're not addressing the problems at the bottom, how do the problems at the top going to work their way down? This seems to be kind of a band-aid approach that's not really addressing the root of the problem.

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: The -- again, the ministry of the interior has IGs that are stationed within the provinces that address to some degree those kinds of issues. But for the most part, our job here at MNSTC-I is to enable the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior government, giving them the capacity to build their IG program, not to address their -- I mean, again, to address -- to build the capacity but not to go out -- we have not developed a plan of strategy for dealing with that level yet of corruption.

Q Okay thank you.

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: (Inaudible) -- contractors there is because, if the contract exists with the government, if a government entity is involved in the transaction, then, yes, the contract will be audited and reviewed by the auditing section. But with --

Q No, I get the contractors and defense guys putting up walls and building and doing things like that -- just the general contractor.

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: Well, that still will be done through the government of Iraq. That's the only entity that's doing that kind of construction. So those come through -- those contracts are reviewed by the auditing section.

Q Okay.

MR. HOLT: Okay.

Q Bryant Jordan. Military.com. Can I have one more question?
Follow-up.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Sure.

Q I'm just curious. Do you ever fence or know of any kind of pushback from the officials there are resented given the fact that we've had some boondoggle contract over there as well -- for example, the police academy. I mean, -- (inaudible) -- look, you know clean up your own corruption mess before you come down on us?

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: I'm sorry. I didn't understand you. I didn't hear you. Q Police academy -- another of our efforts done by our own forces and companies in Iraq. Some of them have been real boondoggles and obviously, you know, corruption involved there. Do you ever get any pushback from the Iraqi government saying, you know, don't come down on us or lay all this corruption -- these corruption conventions on us when you have people over here that are engaged in corruption as well?

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: I haven't heard that argument, but I have heard, for instance the -- within the Ministry of Defense, there was concern about our advocating human rights while they felt that the incident with Blackwater was not handled properly.

Q Sure. All right then. Well, thank you very much.

MR. HOLT: Okay. And we're out of time now, but thank you Colonel Sheila Bryant-Tucker who is with us this morning. She is with the MNSTC-I Inspector General's office, the Inspector General advisor for MNSTC-I. Thank you very much for being with us, ma'am, and we appreciate your taking the time to be with us.

Q Thanks again Jack.

MR. HOLT: Okay, thanks.

COL. BRYANT-TUCKER: Okay, thanks.

END.